

# URBAN FOCUS FOR THE WESTERN LAKE ERIE BASIN

## THE URBAN WATERS FEDERAL PARTNERSHIP

### ABOUT THE URBAN WATERS INITIATIVE

The Western Lake Erie Basin is one of eleven newly selected locations for the nation's Urban Waters Federal Partnership. This partnership seeks to reconnect urban communities, particularly those that are overburdened or economically distressed, with their waterways by improving coordination among federal agencies and collaborating with community-led revitalization efforts to improve our Nation's water systems and promote their economic, environmental and social benefits.

Specifically, the Urban Waters initiative attempts to:

- Promote more efficient and effective use of federal resources through better coordination and targeting of federal investments.
- Recognize and build on local efforts and leadership, by engaging and serving community partners.
- Work with local officials and community-based organizations to leverage area resources and stimulate local economies to create jobs.
- Learn from early and visible victories to fuel long-term action.

Led by these federal agencies and coordinated by the White House Domestic Policy Council and White House Council on Environmental Quality, the Urban Waters Federal Partnership closely aligns with and advances the work of the White House's place-based efforts, including the **Partnership for Sustainable Communities**, to revitalize communities, create jobs and improve the quality of life in cities and towns across the nation. The Urban Waters Federal Partnership also advances the work of the **America's Great Outdoors Initiative** (<http://americasgreatoutdoors.gov/>).

For more information, visit [www.urbanwaters.gov](http://www.urbanwaters.gov)

### ABOUT THE PARTNERSHIP

The Western Lake Erie Basin Urban Waters Federal Partnership strives to support water quality improvements in the basin through ecosystem restoration, sediment cleanup, environmental education and local practices. Federal partner agencies will work with stakeholders from the Western Lake Erie Basin Partnership and the Maumee River Area of Concern, interested municipalities, state agencies, and local non-governmental organizations.

### WHAT'S HAPPENING NOW

In an effort to improve water quality, make public use safer, and restore ecosystems of the watershed, the following projects are already underway in the basin:

#### **Western Lake Erie Basin Partnership (WLEBP) –**

The WLEBP is a tri-state partnership dedicated to improving land and water resource management in the basin and promoting a healthy productive watershed. The WLEBP is a collaboration of fourteen federal, state, and local entities, as well as non-governmental organizations, working together to support the improvement of the Lake Erie ecosystem. Chartered in March of 2006, the Partnership has invested more than \$6 million in research, conservation planning, and conservation implementation in the Western Lake Erie basin.

**Best Management Practices –** NRCS and other partners are providing financial incentives and technical assistance to farmers for the implementation of best management practices on agricultural land. BMPs funded include filter strips, riparian buffers, grassed waterways, cover crops, conservation tillage, and nutrient management plans. Land use changes and water quality monitoring are used to track progress. The collected data is used to develop upland treatment plans.

#### **Area of Concern (AOC) & Great Lakes Restoration Initiative –**

The Maumee River AOC faces aquatic beneficial use impairments largely due to sediment and legacy pollutants. U.S. EPA has designated the Maumee River as a priority area for nonpoint source pollution control under the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. Over \$5.8 million in GLRI funding has been provided to federal, state, and non-profit groups working in the WLEB from 2010-2012. Projects funded include wetlands and wet prairie restorations, TMDL development, nearshore monitoring, green infrastructure, and reforestation.



### ABOUT THE WESTERN LAKE ERIE BASIN AND COMMUNITY

The Western Lake Erie Basin in the three Midwestern states of Ohio, Michigan and Indiana, is rural in western upstream areas, and becomes more urban in the downstream Toledo metropolitan area. The basin is almost 6 million acres in size, home to 2 million people, and drains portions of 29 counties into the shallow western third of Lake Erie. The predominant land use is agriculture (60-80%). With an average depth of 25 feet, western Lake Erie serves as a municipal water source, supports recreational and commercial fishing, and is home to diverse plant and wildlife communities. Despite its biodiversity, the western portion of Lake Erie suffers from high phosphorus and sediment loads, flooding problems, low biological diversity in tributary streams, and harmful algal blooms.

## WHAT'S NEXT

**Connect with Communities** – Many active local, state, and federal partners are working in the basin within the existing WLEB Partnership, the Maumee River AOC, and other structures. Partners include: The Nature Conservancy, Partners for Clean Streams, American Rivers, Environmental Defense Fund, Joyce Foundation, Maumee River Basin Partnership of Local Governments, the City of Toledo, Ohio Sea Grant, Ohio DNR, Ohio EPA, NOAA, USFWS, USACE, NRCS, USEPA and many others. These and other potential partners, as well as local community and neighborhood organizations, will be engaged. Urban needs and partner resources will be assessed, and interested stakeholders will be invited to participate in the Urban Waters efforts, including planning, work plan development, priority setting, and implementation of priority projects.

**Urban Conservation & Earth Team** – Education, technical assistance, outreach, and Earth Team volunteer opportunities are being implemented by NRCS in the WLEB. NRCS's urban work gives residents and local community organizations the opportunity to restore their urban waters through stewardship activities, improved access and use of natural areas, and watershed planning actions. The Urban Waters Federal Partners will continue these programs and increase urban activities in the Western Lake Erie Basin to promote clean tributaries, wetlands, and nearshore waters.

**Urban Restoration Projects** – Areas are being identified by several partners for riparian zone and coastal wetland restoration projects, some using clean dredged material from Toledo Harbor. Restoration sites will be targeted in urban areas where possible. In addition, the City of Toledo and Lucas County are currently collaborating with USACE on a watershed management study. Results from the study will serve as a planning tool for affected communities to manage stormwater runoff. The Urban Waters Federal Partnership will help facilitate the implementation of some of these projects within urban communities.



## THE URBAN WATERS FEDERAL PARTNERSHIP

The partnership includes: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Department of the Army (Army Corps of Engineers), U.S. Department of Commerce (Economic Development Administration, and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration), Corporation for National and Community Service, U.S. Department of Education, U.S. Department of Energy, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences), U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, U.S. Department of the Interior, U.S. Department of Transportation

**For more information on the Western Lake Erie Basin Urban Waters efforts, please contact the lead agency representatives:**

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